

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating the Performing Arts**  
*May 12, 2009*

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated. It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you to the White House for an evening of music and poetry and spoken word from some of our Nation's most gifted performers, both distinguished veterans and up-and-coming young talents.

Now, we're here tonight not just to enjoy the works of these artists, but also to highlight the importance of the arts in our life and in our Nation, in our Nation's history. We're here to celebrate the power of words and music to help us appreciate beauty, but also to understand pain, to inspire us to action and to spur us on when we start to lose hope, to lift us up out of our daily existence, even if it's just for a few moments, and return us with hearts that are a little bit bigger and fuller than they were before.

The great jazz musician, Louis Armstrong, once said simply, "What we play is life." What we play is life, and that is what these artists do. They express the joys and hardships of life and remind us how much all of us have in common. It's a great gift and a great responsibility, and we're honored to host them here at the White House tonight.

I now have the privilege of introducing the star of the show, somebody who brings a lot of poetry to my own life, the First Lady, Michelle Obama.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. These remarks were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Performing arts, White House celebration.

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